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# What's God Up To?

Diane G.H. Kilmer

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# What's God Up To?

DIANE G.H. KILMER

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**H**ave you ever wondered what God was up to? That's what I was thinking when the young woman came up to me, tentatively, telling me that she had been praying for a spiritual mentor, and that my name kept coming to her mind. Would I meet with her, she asked?

Over the next three weeks, four more people approached me, each asking to meet regularly to discuss some aspect of their spiritual life. A few of them had attended my classes on prayer or other topics. But this was something new, and I felt excited that I might get to encourage these people toward God in some new way. What was God up to?

## **OFFERING SPIRITUAL COMPANIONSHIP**

Since that autumn nine years ago, I figured out that God has invited me into an ancient ministry traditionally described as spiritual direction. Sometimes people refer to this calling as "holy listening" or "spiritual companionship." Most spiritual directors see themselves as someone placed along another's spiritual path, for the purpose of helping the directee notice the movement of God in his or her daily life. Through listening, asking questions, being prayerfully present in the silences during each session, a spiritual director encourages another to take time to wonder, "What is God up to" and determine how they might want to respond. Most spiritual directors do not tell a person what to do or how to think. Instead, they simply direct the attention of their client toward God, the true spiritual director.

## **WHY DO PEOPLE SEEK SPIRITUAL DIRECTION?**

Sometimes, people need others to help them process a life-changing event. For example, if you got into a car accident, you would likely see a physician to care for your body. You might also see a psychologist to deal with the trauma caused by the crash. Meeting with a spiritual director could provide a safe, nonjudgmental environment to explore the spiritual aspects of the event.

Some people meet with a spiritual director only a few times to address one specific issue, such as making an important decision. Others may meet with their director for a couple of years, looking for accountability, or for an area of focus on a specific aspect of their spiritual life. Still others maintain ongoing, once-a-month appointments for years. They see advantages in a long-term relationship with a spiritual companion who has carefully listened for a long time; someone who can remind them of God's past actions in their life as an encouragement toward hope for their future.

Some people find that making an appointment to "think about God in their lives" is a useful way to get off the treadmill and regain perspective.

## **WHAT HAPPENS DURING A SPIRITUAL DIRECTION SESSION?**

Before a directee arrives session, which typically lasts for one hour, I've done some preparation of my own. Besides the two-year training I received in an ecumenical certification program, I see my own spiri-

tual director once a month and meet with a peer supervisory group once a month to maintain professional accountability. And before each session, I sit for a few minutes in the meeting room to pray.

Every session is different. I can only summarize what happens by stating that the creative breadth of personal, customized care that God provides each individual continues to astonish me. I try to stay out of the way, to merely assist as a spiritual “midwife” as God reveals himself to each directee in exactly the ways she or he needs. A woman who met with me for five years describes what God was up to during her spiritual direction experience:

Being heard. I never realized how important that was to me. I could enter a relationship where I got to do most of the talking, where it was about God’s activity in my life. I could have someone mirror back to me what was shared, without judgment, or advice. I could receive and not feel responsible to “put out;” where I could be held accountable only to the process, as God moves it; the gentle nudging towards a creative God who deeply longs for us; learning to invite God into everything. Each time I visited that room, I felt a deep sense of beauty and welcoming by Christ, that somehow, I was His guest.

DIANE G. H. KILMER

Ms. Kilmer serves seekers in mid-Michigan as a certified spiritual director and speaks at conferences, retreats, and special events.

